

Georgia Department of Human Resources

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR CHILD SUPPORT RECIPIENTS

The Family Support Registry in Georgia has centralized the collection and processing of child support payments made by income deduction. In the past, employers withheld wages from noncustodial parents according to court orders and sent them to each custodial parent individually. With the Registry, they now send payments to only one address. In turn, the Registry processes the payment for distribution by the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE).

The process, required by federal law, began July 1, 1999. All child support income deduction orders handled by OCSE will go through the Registry, as well as any non-OCSE income deductions from court orders dated January 1, 1994 or later.

Custodial parents will still get their checks according to the court order. Some people may get their checks later than they are accustomed to getting them. Here are some of the most frequently asked questions that clients may have about the new payment system.

1. Why does my child support have to go the Family Support Registry? I have been getting my check from the employer directly with no problems.

Federal law requires each state to establish one place to receive all income deduction payments. Having a single place to send child support payments makes it easier for employers to process income deduction orders. If your support is being paid through an income deduction and does not involve OCSE, it will now have to go through the Registry unless the income deduction was ordered before January 1, 1994.

2. How much time does it take for the Registry to process the money and get it to me?

The entire process should take six to eight days from the time the employer deducts the money from the noncustodial parent's payroll, two days to send the support payment to the Registry, two days for the Registry to process the money and mail the check, and three days for the check to arrive in the mail.

3. Will I be notified when the payments start going to the Family Support Registry?

Once OCSE registers your case, it will send a notice to you, to the employer, and to the person owing the child support. Your payment will start going to the Registry within 60 days of this notice.

4. What happens if the noncustodial parent has more than one child support case?

If the amount being deducted from the noncustodial parent's payroll is not enough to pay all of the child support owed, the money will be divided among the different families according to how much is due each family. Any shortfall in the amount is the responsibility of the noncustodial parent.

5. I have a new income deduction order. How will the Family Support Registry know about it?

The law requires that the attorney filing the new income deduction order provide OCSE with a copy. Once the OCSE office receives the order, the account will be registered. OCSE may need to call you or the court to get any missing information about the order. If you want to register your income deduction order yourself, you may send a copy of the order to:

Financial Customer Service Unit
PO Box 857
Jonesboro, GA 30237

6. Who do I call if my child support check is late, missing or is for the wrong amount?

OCSE operates a hotline that you may call for help. Call 404-657-2780 if you are in the 404, 470, 678 or 770 dialing area. The toll-free number outside Atlanta is 1-800-227-7993. The hotline operates 24 hours a day seven days a week (excluding holidays).

7. My child support has been going through a Child Support Receiver's Office. Will this continue?

No. By the end of the year, most of the income deductions that are currently being paid to a receiver will go through the Registry. Some receivers will continue to enforce cases, but they will not be processing the money and sending out checks.

8. What happens if my money gets lost in the Registry?

Sometimes payments are delayed because the Registry cannot identify where a payment should go. If this occurs, the Registry will call the employer to get enough information to process the payment. If the registry still cannot identify it, OCSE's Customer Service Unit will try to find out where the payment is supposed to go. OCSE will then enter the case in the Registry and send the money to the family within 48 hours. If OCSE cannot locate the parent, it will send the money back to the employer. If you believe your payment has been lost, call OCSE at the telephone numbers mentioned above.

9. Is there a fee for using the Registry to pay child support?

There is currently no fee for using the Registry. The law does authorize OCSE to collect a fee. If the agency decides to charge a fee for the Registry, it will contact employers to let them know of the change. The noncustodial parent will be responsible for paying the fee.

10. What can be done to reduce the amount of time it takes to get my check?

You can have child support payments deposited directly into a bank account, reducing the time it takes to receive a payment by as much as three days. OCSE is working with employers to send the payroll deductions to the Registry electronically as well. For more information, call 404-657-2780 or 1-800-227-7993 if you are outside Atlanta.